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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: February 23, 2007

No Comment from PR Company

11. Erika Rumpold, head of public relations company 100 Percent Communications, which received over 6 million Euros to promote Eurofighters refused to answer questions at the parliamentary inquiry looking into the purchase of the planes. Committee members said Rumpold may face a fine similar to that imposed by a court on a lobbyist for the Eurofighter manufacturer EADS, who also refused to testify. The inquiry seeks to learn what happened to the rest of the 6.6 million Euros, as only 2 million went into advertising, reports ORF TV's prime time news Zeit im Bild I on Thursday.

SPOe Meeting

12. At the meeting of the Social Democrats' cabinet members in Vienna yesterday, Chancellor and SPOe party boss Alfred Gusenbauer spoke out against giving skilled workers from Eastern European countries easy access to the Austrian job market, thus dismissing a proposal by Economics Minister Martin Bartenstein (OeVP), who suggested bringing in foreign workers to counter labor shortages in industry. For Gusenbauer, however, this is the "wrong way." He proposed training these skilled workers in Austria instead, according to ORF online news.

UN Boss in Vienna

13. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, speaking in Vienna yesterday, said he was deeply concerned by the international community's conflict with Iran and its nuclear program. He made the remarks during a press conference with Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. In an interview with an Austrian daily, the UN Secretary General underscored Iran must comply with UN resolutions

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as soon as possible.

Speaking in Vienna, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon told semi-official daily Wiener Zeitung that it is "indeed, highly regrettable that ultimately Iran failed to comply with the Security Council resolution. I am deeply concerned. The way this dispute is developing is very unfortunate. The government in Tehran should strive for a better future for the Iranian people." Ban Ki Moon is visiting the IAEA and meeting with Director General Mohammed ElBaradei during his two-day visit to Vienna. He is also meeting with the head of the UN's Vienna office, Antonio Maria Costa. On Thursday, in addition to the Foreign Minister, the UN chief held talks with Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Chancellor Alfred

Gusenbauer and Parliamentary President Barbara Prammer.

In an interview with centrist daily Die Presse, Ban Ki Moon criticized Iran's defiance of the UN in the dispute over its nuclear ambitions. He repeated he is "deeply concerned" over Iran's stance and the fact that Tehran has chosen to "ignore international calls to suspend uranium enrichment. Iran should have convinced the world that its right to use nuclear power is indeed motivated by peaceful purposes. The country should have completed the entire IAEA verification process, but failed to do so. Now, the IAEA report will be referred to the UN Security Council. It is up to the Council to decide which measures to take."

Talking to liberal daily Der Standard, the UN Secretary General urged the "Iranian leadership to launch negotiations now on how the dispute can be resolved, even before the UN Security Council takes further measures. A tightening of the sanctions would be deplorable." He added that he will have to "discuss the issue with the Security Council. And whatever initiatives they propose, I'm prepared to follow up on them."

Bid to Ban Cluster Bombs Begins

14. The Austrian government has banned the use of cluster bombs by its armed forces. The ban came ahead of a 48-nation meeting called by Norway to try to stop the use of such bombs. The Oslo meeting began Thursday without the US, Russia and China, after arms talks in Geneva last November failed to achieve progress toward a ban. Norway says it wants the weapons to be outlawed by 2008, but as they are considered an effective military tool, a ban on cluster bombs is unlikely. Nevertheless, Austria has offered to host a follow up conference to the Oslo meeting this fall, says ORF radio.

Iran Defies UN

15. The standoff between the United Nations and Iran over Iran's nuclear program has entered a new phase: A report by the International Atomic Energy Agency said Tehran failed to meet a February 21 deadline to suspend uranium enrichment. The report also says Iran is expanding its program, defying a UN resolution of December 2006. For its part, Iran said the UN call for it to stop its nuclear program was "unacceptable" and had no legal basis. Permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany will meet in London Monday to discuss further sanctions against Iran. On ORF radio, UN Ambassador to UNVIC Gregory Schulte outlined the US strategy on Iran: "Our goal is to convince the leadership in Tehran to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions." Speaking on ORF radio's early morning news Morgenjournal, US Ambassador to UNVIC Gregory Schulte explained the US wants to convince Tehran to give up its nuclear weapons ambitions: "We are mounting a major diplomatic effort, not on our own, but multilaterally, with the countries of Europe, with Russia, with China. We're trying to convince the leadership in Tehran to change course." Like all Austrian media, centrist daily Die Presse reports on the "saber rattling in the Persian Gulf." With a second US aircraft carrier having arrived in the region, military pressure is mounting, the daily says, and adds that military experts see this as a sign the White House is prepared for escalation in the conflict with Iran. However, America's tough stance is also to support the increasingly hectic diplomatic efforts to get Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program. So far, the US has not made a political decision in favor of a military confrontation with Iran. Leaking alleged deployment plans and attack scenarios is part of Washington's escalation strategy aimed both at browbeating Iran into compliance and sending a message to Russia, China, and America's European allies, the Presse suggests.

US Influence on EU Foreign Policy

16. The deputy head of the EU Social Democrats, Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda, says "the Americans are influencing EU foreign policy to an ever greater extent." Swoboda is irritated that the political

positions of the EU and the US on the issue of a missile defense shield in Europe have not been coordinated. The deputy head of the EU Social Democrats, Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda, told mass-circulation daily Kurier he considers the US decision to establish the missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic a "unilateral move on the part of the Americans." The issue is being debated in the (Social Democrats') EU foreign policy committee, Swoboda said, stressing that the Americans' "actions in member states is not in the EU's interests. The US is influencing the EU's foreign policy to an ever-greater extent." The absence of US and EU coordination on missile defense policies is equally irritating: "This is a go-it-alone operation by the US." Another issue demonstrating how the EU is being "steamrollered" by the US is the nuclear row with Iran, Swoboda explains: "The dispute is driving the (EU) member states into the Americans' arms, including neutral Austria" which could involve Austria directly or indirectly in a conflict; a role incompatible with that of a neutral state, the MEP says. Swoboda is calling for an open debate of such issues in Austria, and urges Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik to officially state Austria's misgivings regarding the US missile defense plans with her EU colleagues.

US Soldier Sentenced to Jail Term

[17](#). A US soldier who served in Iraq has been sentenced to one hundred years in a military detention facility. 24-year-old Sgt. Paul E. Cortez pled guilty to the rape and murder of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and to killing her family. He also received a dishonorable discharge under a plea agreement with prosecutors, ORF radio early morning news Morgenjournal reports.

Coalition Partners BaQProdi

[18](#). In Italy, party leaders from the center-left coalition have agreed to support Romano Prodi's bid to stay on as Prime Minister. The apparent agreement came a day after Prodi resigned when he lost a key Senate vote on his foreign policy. Several of his coalition partners had opposed Italian troop deployments in Afghanistan and his plans to expand a US air base in Italy, writes ORF online news.

McCaw